

THE ACOLYTE



THE ACOLYTE

AN AMATEUR MAGAZINE OF FANTASY AND THE SUPERNATURAL

Edited and published by
Francis T. Laney
720 Tenth Street
Clarkston, Washington

Associate Editors: Duane W. Rimel, Franklin Lee Baldwin

Vol. I Spring -- 1943 No. 3

THE ACOLYTE IS DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF THE
LATE H. P. LOVECRAFT BY A SINCERE ACOLYTE.

Cover: Duane W. Rimel

Stories:

MUSIC OF THE STARS	Duane W. Rimel	7
VARIETY IS THE SPICE	Harry Warner, Jr.	15
KEEPER OF THE GATE	Henry A. Ackermann	21
THE SUMMONS	Alan Child	29

Poems:

THE MIME OF SLEEP	Clark Ashton Smith	6
CLAIMED	Virginia Anderson	6
THE SNAKE	Duane W. Rimel	12
ANGKOR THOM	Virginia Anderson	20
NIGHT	Wilhelm Jensen/Wm. H. Evans	25

Articles and Features:

EDITORIALLY SPEAKING	The Editor	1
POETRY AND THE ARTISTIC IDEAL	H. P. Lovecraft	3
SUPERSTITIOUS?	H. Ken Bulmer	13
WITHIN THE CIRCLE	Franklin Lee Baldwin	18
LITTLE KNOWN FANTAISISTES	Harold Wakefield	19
CANADA CALLING	Leslie A. Croutch	26
CRACKS--WISE AND OTHERWISE	The Readers	27

The Acolyte is published quarterly, appearing on the 15th day of March, June, September, and December. Subscription: 35¢ for four issues. Subscriptions exchanged with other amateur publications. Advertisements by arrangement. Opinions expressed herein, unless signed by me, are not necessarily my own. This magazine is not responsible for disputes arising from advertising contained in its pages. The Acolyte is an amateur and non-profit publication, and no payment is made for accepted material. Accepted material is subject to editorial revision if necessary. The Acolyte confines itself to material dealing with fantasy and the supernatural; usable material which is outside its scope will be placed with some other fanzine. Comments on this magazine; and articles, stories, and poems are invited.

EDITORIALLY SPEAKING

--ooOoo--

AN EVENT IN THE LIFE of any magazine, particularly an amateur one, is the opportunity to publish something by Clark Ashton Smith, greatest

living weird and fantasy author. The Acolyte is proud and happy to present the previously unpublished sonnet, "The Mime of Sleep".

-oOo-

PROSE PASTELS, a series of Baudelairesque prose poems by Clark Ashton Smith, will be featured in the next issue of The Acolyte. These originally appeared in Fantasy Fan in 1934, but Mr. Smith has not only given us full permission to reprint them, but has promised us other previously unpublished Pastels.

-oOo-

CLARK ASHTON SMITH in a mimeographed, amateur sheet is a scathing indictment of professional magazines. The best, most original, and most artistic output of our greatest fantasistes has no chance with the pulps---often is never even written---for the simple reason that material accepted by any prozine must be "slanted" directly for that particular editor, and must conform to a whole host of iron-clad rules. The end product of this type of editing is a magazine whose originality and vigor are largely crushed out.

-oOo-

IN THE EARLY DAYS of science-fiction and fantasy, rules played a surprisingly minor part. Anyone who has read the first three years of Amazing, or the Farnsworth Wright Weird Tales, or a reasonably complete cross-section of fantasy from the old Argosy cannot have failed to notice the wide variety of subject-matter, plot, and approach in those pioneer days. There is hackwork of course; but the very fact that the sky was the limit, that straight formula stuff was largely unknown (due to the lack of any precedents to construct a formula by) makes even the hackwork refreshing reading in these stereotyped times.

-oOo-

THE ACOLYTE GANG particularly wishes to bring to your attention the paragraphs in "Cracks--" by Harry Warner and Lilith Lorraine. Warner's essay-in-miniature is one of the solidest bits we've seen for a long time; while Miss Lorraine's projected magazine is something which should make all die-hard fantasy fans slaver with joy.

-oOo-

MENTION OF MISS LORRAINE reminds me to recommend to you her latest volume of verse, Beyond Bewilderment. While the bulk of it is non-fantasy, there are a number of very fine fantastic and weird verses scattered through it. She is at present working on another volume (her fourth) called The Day Before Judgement, which will be entirely weird, stf, and fantastic verse. This is certain to be a "Must-Have" item for all fantasy collectors, and we will keep you posted on the publication date.

-oOo-

AUGUST DERLETH HAS KINDLY GIVEN The Acolyte blanket permission to use anything by Lovecraft, provided we can also get permission from the original publishers. This will mean that you folks will get to read a vast amount of little-known Lovecraft in the very near future---perhaps even an all-Lovecraft issue.

-oOc-

THE WAR HAS SUSPENDED publication of the remaining two volumes in the Lovecraft Trilogy, but Mr. Derleth states that they will be issued immediately on the conclusion of hostilities. Volume Two will contain the two short novels, unpublished stories, selected poetry, and prose in essay form; Volume Three will consist entirely of letters.

-oOo-

THIS ISSUE OF THE ACOLYTE is particularly dedicated to Duane Rimele, who drew, carved, and printed the cover as a token of his interest in fantasy generally and fandom in particular. Duane did a number of linoleums for such magazines as Fantasy Fan, Fantasy, and Fanciful Tales, but this is his first for several years---though we hope not his last. Thanks a lot, Duane.

(Turn to Page 29)

POETRY AND THE ARTISTIC IDEAL

by H. P. Lovecraft

-00o-

(The following article is the body of a letter written by H. P. Lovecraft in 1929 to Miss Elizabeth Toldridge of Washington, D. C. Miss Toldridge was a genteel "lady poet" of advanced age who had a deep Victorian indoctrination which H. P. L. was trying to modify. The originals of this and other letters of the same series are in the Harris Collection, John Hay Library, Providence, Rhode Island. "The Acolyte" is enabled to use this article through the courtesy of R. H. Barlow. It has never before been published. FTL.)

-00o-

About the nature of poetry---I surely did not mean to belittle it by calling it "simply an elegant amusement", because I believe that nothing in existence is more important than elegant amusement. What I wished to recommend was that you beware against making a burden of the art; for if you do that, you make it fail of its purpose, which is to amuse the creator. I wished to make it clear that the fun and function of poetry are all comprised within the process of creating it, and that it is needless and unwise to worry about what happens to it once it is written. Its importance resides in the pleasure it gives you during the writing---the mental and emotional satisfaction of self-expression. Once it has given you this, it has fully and adequately performed its function; and there is no need to bother about who else sees it---although it is of course pleasant to have others see one's work, so that there can be criticism and helpful discussion about it. And as I say, this does not imply any triviality on the part of the art; for is not emotional satisfaction the only supreme goal of any intelligent life? The cosmos contains nothing of greater importance for the negligible atoms called human beings than the condition of being elegantly amused.

It is only mental laziness and artificial convention which can lead us to measure "accomplishment" by the approval of others. All these things mean nothing. The very idea of "Accomplishment" is basically an artificiality and an illusion. However, if we need a set of empirical working standards---protective illusions, as it were---we can very logically say that the satisfaction of our own emotions is the one solid thing which we can ever get out of life; the only thing we have any rational right to call "success" or "accomplishment" in a quasi-absolute sense. Each thinking person is really a solitary entity facing the formless and illimitable cosmos. None of the other entities really count except as minor decorative factors. Naturally "success" and "accomplishment" can not be the same for any two persons, since each individual has a distinctive set of emotional needs wholly peculiar to himself. The only constant and homogeneous element behind the verbal abstractions is that of emotional equilibrium---a subjective state of satisfaction. If we can attain this, we have "success" and "accomplishment"---but it doesn't matter how we do it so long as we attain it somehow, and each person's particular "success" is a different objective entity or condition from any other person's "success". Certainly, life can have no greater gift than emotional contentment during the aimless years from nothingness to nothingness again!

However---this is not to imply that the business of acquiring contentment is an easy or frivolous matter. Only the psychology of Victorian illusion and hypocrisy tries to invest trivial and meaningless things with the insipid glamour of a pretended jollity and happiness. In stern fact, the relentless demands prompted by our glandular

and nervous reactions are exceedingly complex, contradictory, and imperious in their nature; and subject to rigid and intricate laws of psychology, physiology, biochemistry, and physics which must be realistically studied and familiarly known before they can be adequately dealt with. So real and fixed is this state of things, that we may easily see how futile it is to expect anything to produce emotional satisfaction---or to pretend that it does---unless all the genuine laws of emotion and nerve-reaction are recognized and complied with. False or insincere amusement is the sort of activity which does not meet the real psychological demands of the human glandular-nervous system, but merely affects to do so. Real amusement is the sort which is based on a knowledge of real needs, and which therefore hits the spot.

This latter kind of amusement is what art is--- and there is nothing more important in the universe. You may clearly see that there can be no frivolity in this element, because it implies a close knowledge of real psychological demands, and a strict adherence to them. As soon as the artistic expression diverges from the sphere of natural demand it becomes trivial, insincere, and artificial---ceasing in fact to be artistic at all. This means exactly the same thing that you mean when, using the older conventional terminology, you speak of art as "the very language of the soul". What used to be called the "soul" in the days of religious myth, is in fact simply the fixed sum total of human instincts and emotions, as motivated and directed by sense-impressions, gland-secretions, and nerve-reactions. Art is, surely enough, the one authentic language of this sharply-patterned, exacting and complex congeries of natural processes; and as such is as serious as anything else in life. But life itself is not very serious---not even worth counting in a general survey of the cosmos---so we must not make ourselves ridiculous by imputing too grave an importance to anything we do or feel. And as I have said, the fact that art is the natural language of the "soul" or sense-gland-nerve system, does not by any means imply that it depends for its effectiveness upon an audience. It is a serious matter as such things go---but its only true province is to satisfy the producer's emotions. And when its producer takes it too seriously, he defeats its purpose by annulling its possible satisfying effect through a fresh load of worry!

As for art's relation to "prophecy and truth"---not much can be said for that. Truth is something which can't be got at except by a slow piecing together of data, little by little, through the gradual, cautious operation of those rigid cognitive processes whereby we know that two and four are different things, and that black and white are not the same. Any other use of the word is elliptical, figurative, relative, or emptily meaningless---though we often employ it to express the real conformity of a work of art to the emotions it is designed to satisfy. This "truth to the emotions" of a work of art of course has nothing to do with the actual, absolute truth as a delineator of what is or isn't so in the domain of reality. What it is "true" to is merely the emotional demands of the average sense-gland-nerve system of average people---and these demands have no relation to the absolute facts of the universe. A work of art must be "true" to human feeling, but it need not be at all true to actual objective fact. This sounds like ambiguity until we stop to consider that we use the word "true" to express two antipodially different things---a circumstance which leads me to condemn the use of the word except in its literal sense of objective, scientific reality. "Prophecy" is the business of the scientist and philosophic historian---not of the poet. All the poet can do is to guess, absorb other people's conclusions, and set forth his feelings in symbolic form. Naturally he is quick to absorb impressions---the quality that makes him a poet gives him this facility---and sensitive in his reaction to them; so that when he sets them forth symbolically he

is usually reflecting a section of current opinion in a more than commonly graphic and poignant way. This makes his voice more clearly audible than the average, and gains him the reputation of "prophet" when he happens to touch upon the territory generally covered by the conception of "prophecy".

But there is no exactitude, authority, or close cerebration in what he "prophesies"---and he is in truth more often wrong than right, since he is always led by unreliable sympathies and caprices rather than by a coolly intelligent analysis of the events concerned, and a calmly rational estimate of the probable result of their interaction. It is never the glowing bard, but always the steel-cold man of intelligence, who gets closest to the truth---the question of what is and what isn't---and has the best chance of constructing a sound forecast of what will be. Poetry and art for beauty---but science and philosophy for truth. It was a glowing, misty-minded young poet, and not a sober man of analytical intellect, who muddled matters by fastening a false linkage of truth and beauty upon the popular consciousness!

However---this isn't to say that poets and artists are less important than men of science, for in hard fact we must admit that truth is nothing of any intrinsic importance. It doesn't matter a hang whether we know anything about anything or not, so long as we can be contented. If we can happily do it, we might just as well believe in Santa Claus, god, a green-cheese moon, fairies, witches, good and evil, unicorns, ghosts, immortality, the Arabian Nights, a flat earth, etc., as learn the real facts about the universe and its streams and patterns of eternal and alternatingly evolving and devolving energy. Truth becomes important only when it is necessary to establish our emotional satisfaction. Emotional satisfaction is the one big thing; and the greatest person is the one who can create the thing most emotionally satisfying, whether or not it has any relation to truth or prophecy. On the whole, I think that beauty is more often satisfying than truth; so that the poet and artist are really somewhat ahead of the scientist and philosopher in a sound and exquisite culture. It is certain that the human personality never attained a greater height of satisfying realisation than in the age of Pericles---yet we know that Periclean Athens was in many respects childishly naive and ignorant in its conception of the universe. The present age, though, has it natural emotional demand for truth very keenly developed; so that a classic parallel will work very exactly. Successful emotional adjustment or equilibrium today undoubtedly requires a far greater proportion of realistic fact-comprehension than an equally successful adjustment in the hell of 400 B.C.---or even in our own mutable civilisation a generation or two ago. This does not imply any especial advance, but merely a change. We can't regulate our emotional demands, and there is no reason to prefer any one set to any other. All we can do is to note their slow, automatic, deterministic change, and to meet them as best we may in the art-forms and folk-ways of each new generation. There is nothing more to life than that.

Art, then, is really very important---perhaps the most all-inclusive and important single element in life---though it abrogates its function and ceases to be art as soon as it becomes self-conscious, puffed with illusions of cosmic significance, (as distinguished from local, human, emotional significance) or burdened with ulterior considerations and worries based on its possible reception by the world and its effect on the creator's position. There is an old epigram which defines a gentleman as "a man who doesn't give a damn whether he's a gentleman or not"---and I would extend its principle to other arts than that of living, by averring that an artist is one who doesn't give a damn whether he is creating art or not, but who succeeds through not trying to succeed; who aims simply to express himself, and only

THE MIME OF SLEEP

by Clark Ashton Smith

-oOo-

My dreams are like some strange, disordered mime:
A plot that pandemonian shadows feign
Ravels half-told; and dead loves live again
In settings of distorted place and time:
A broken drama, puerile or sublime,
Whose riddled meaning I must guess in vain;
A masque, whose grey grotesques of mirth and pain
Move randomly through an occulted clime.

But though they pass, and slumber blot them all,
Your beauty's burning shade more slowly dims--
Where, dancing like Salome, you let fall,
In splendid sequence under a sad sky,
The seven veils of fantasy that I
Have wound about your young, delightful limbs.

POETRY AND THE ARTISTIC IDEAL. (concluded)

incidentally finds himself creating real beauty. We may describe the successful aesthete in a very free paraphrase of Waller---

"He sought content, and filled his arms with bays."

Certainly, all true poetry comes out of experience and emotion; for we cannot have an authentic urge for expression unless we have really lived or felt what we want to say. This does not mean that every poem must describe some specific objective incident in our history, but merely that it must adhere to territory with which we are sufficiently familiar to harbour really profound and poignant feelings concerning it.

CLAIMED

by Virginia Anderson

-oOo-

....And one who held his own desired to keep
The strange archaic cask where it belonged.
But he who held it meant to hoard; and reap
The sea's wild rage before he let it go.
So came the tides, where tides do not belong.
And others gave white horses, so the sea,
Though vexed, might know they did not mean the wrong
Of keeping him from what by rights was his.
And three against him; then the three were two,
The fair-haired maiden and the man of greed....
The dead men cast her from him, and he knew
That he must face the wrath of HIM alone!

(Dedicated to Francis Stevens by Nanek)

MUSIC OF THE STARS

by Duane W. Rimel

-oo-

"There are black zones of shadow close to our daily paths, and now and then some evil soul breaks a passage through." -- H. P. Lovecraft

The Thing on The Door-Step

--ooOoo--

I am called a murderer because I destroyed my best friend; killed him in cold blood. Yet I will try to prove that in so doing I performed an act of mercy---removed something that never should have broken through into this three-dimensional world, and saved my friend from a horror worse than death.

Men will read this and laugh and call me mad, because much that happened cannot be labeled and proven in a court of law. Indeed, I often wonder if I beheld the truth---I who saw the ghastly finish. There is much in this world and in other worlds that our five senses do not perceive, and what lies beyond is found only in wild imagination and dream.

I only hope that I killed him in time. If I can believe what I see in my dreams, I failed. And if I waited too long before I fired that last bullet, I shall welcome the fate that threatens to devour me.

Frank Baldwin and I were comrades for eleven long years. It was a friendship that intensified as time went on, nourished by avid mutual interests in weird music and literature. We were born and raised in the same village, and it was---as a cultured author and correspondent of ours who lived in Providence often remarked---unusual to find two people with such bizarre interests in a village whose population was less than six hundred. It was fortunate, yes; but now I wish we had never probed so far into spheres of the awful unknown.

The trouble began April 13, 1940. I was visiting my friend that day, and during a rambling conversation he hinted that he had discovered on the piano several combinations of musical tones that disturbed him. It was evening and we were alone in the huge, two-story house that stands there today, mouldy and empty beneath a giant maple, gaunt reminder of the horror we unleashed within it.

Baldwin was a pianist of great ability, and I admired the talent which dwarfed my own musical skill. The wild, weird music he loved often drove me into fits of melancholy I could not fathom. It is indeed a pity that none of those original manuscripts were saved, for many of them were classics of horror, and others so fantastic that I would hesitate to call them music at all.

His statement troubled me; heretofore he had had utter confidence in his mad keyboard wanderings. I offered assistance. Saying nothing, he went to the piano, switched on a nearby floor-lamp and sat down. His dark eyes fastened on the keys; his lithe, white fingers poised above them for an instant, and descended.

There was a weird cascade of sound as he ran the whole-tone scales from one end of the piano to the other, followed by a series of intricate variations that startled and amazed me. I had never heard anything to compare with it; it was utterly "out of the world". I listened, entranced, as his flying fingers wove a curious symphony of horror. I cannot describe that music any other way. The strains were eerie and unearthly, and stirred the very reaches of my soul. It resembled no standard classical music such as Rachmaninoff's "Isle of the Dead", or Saint-Saens' "Danse Macabre". It was tortuous, musical madness.

At last the thing ended with a crash of discord, and a strained silence fell over the shadowy room. Baldwyn turned, face taut, and put his fingers to his lips. He pointed at the wall beyond the piano. At first I thought he was jesting, but when I saw his pale, handsome face drawn and worried, I glanced at the darkened walls and listened.

For a while I heard nothing; then a faint, insidious rustling disturbed the silence. It could have been a mouse running across the floor upstairs. But this sound came from the walls. The patter of tiny claws on wood, the rustle of small bodies. . . rats! Many rats scrambling in the walls. Gradually the squeaking and scratching diminished and became a trickle of sound that faded away in the direction of the cellar.

I stood up, trembling. Baldwyn faced me, eyes gleaming, jaw set.

"I've done it, Rambeau; I always thought I could. There's a music that stirs every kind of beast, even ourselves. Look at the Pied Piper.... I've made history repeat itself! But I'm going further; I'm going to compose the music that makes men go mad, learn the music of the stars . . . even if I have to use special instruments to do it."

I tried to pass it off as a joke, but he was quite serious. Baldwyn had always been willful, and I knew that argument was futile. However, I will admit that the very idea began to fascinate me, and what mental barriers I had built were weakening as I listened further to his strange plan. For the weird and macabre are as much a part of me as they were a part of him, and the odd music had cast a curious spell over me. Yet I was skeptical, and told him so. I failed to grasp his ultimate ambition; perhaps he hadn't thought of it then, but the possibilities of the thing were staggering.

We had read that strange story of Erich Zann and the fate he met tinkering with musical threads of the ultimate void. Nor were we ignorant of the savage music with which certain tribes in Haiti summon their evil Gods.

We had tried for years to find copies of various forbidden tomes of ancient lore; the Necronomicon by the mad Arab, Abdul Alhazred, the strange Book of Eibon, and L'iving Prinn's hideous De Vermis Mysteriis--but in vain. We had lived the simpler weird excitements--nights in haunted houses and mouldy graveyards...digging corpses by candle-light... But we wanted the real thing, though always it was just beyond our fingertips. Even our learned friend in Providence could not help us. He had read passages from a few of the less terrible books, and cautioned us time and again. Now I am glad we never found them, for what we did unearth was bad enough. I am tempted to believe that our friend, with his wide influence among the fantaisiste, made an effort to keep those selfsame books from reaching us. Certainly, several good leads vanished into thin air.

On one of my rounds of book-shops in Spokane I had found, by sheer accident, an English translation of the Chronike von Nath, by the blind German mystic, Rudolf Yergler, who in 1653 finished his momentous work just before his sight gave out. The first edition sent its author to a madhouse in Berlin, and earned for itself a public suppression. Although modified by the translator, James Sheffield (1781), the text was wild beyond imagination.

As Baldwyn gradually disclosed his scheme for composing the music of the stars, he referred again and again to passages in the Chronicle of Nath. And this frightened me, for I too had read it, and knew that it contained odd musical rhythm patterns designed to summon certain star-born monsters from the earth's core and from other worlds and dimensions. For all that, Yergler had not been a musician, and whether he had copied the formulas from older tomes or was himself their father, I was never able to find out. Surely Baldwyn had dreamed a strange dream.

He said the preliminary work would require solitude for a week, at least. That would give him sufficient time to decipher the sinister formulae in the ancient book, and to make adjustments on his Lunachord upstairs. He was a master technician, and had found on his instrument tonal combinations that baffled fellow musicians. Milt Herth, of radio fame, has done the same thing on a Hammond Organ, which the Lunachord closely resembles. Since a Lunachord's tones are actually electrical impulses, controlled by fifteen dials on the intricate panel above the two keyboards, and capable of imitating anything from a bass horn to a piccolo, the variations are endless. Baldwyn estimated that there were roughly over a million tonal possibilities, although many would possess no distinction. I wondered at first how he had planned to invent such outre music on a mere piano; but here, ready-made, was the solution---a scientific achievement awaiting exploration.

Walking homeward beneath a pale half-moon, my enthusiasm waned. He had not mentioned precisely what he intended to summon with his alarming music. Yergler himself was singularly vague on that point, or else Sheffield had deleted sections of the hideous text---an entirely logical premise. Indeed, what earthly music---i.e., musical tones audible to the human ear---could call from the gulf something totally unearthly? My better judgement revolted. Baldwyn was lighting dangerous fires, but the very limits of man's knowledge regarding space, time and infinity would keep him from getting his fingers burned. Still, Yergler had done it; or something just as bad, and I recalled Sheffield's preface, which gave a guarded account of the alchemist's mysterious death in the madhouse.

During a severe thunderstorm there was heard outside and above his room a hideous cacophony, seeming to come from the very heavens. There had been a broken shutter, a wild scream; and Yergler had been found slumped in a corner of the room in an attitude of extreme terror, dead eyes bulging upward, his face and body pitted with holes that resembled burns but were not. However, I knew that many early historians had possessed the grievous fault of gross exaggeration and verbal distortion.

I could scarcely wait for the ensuing week to pass, realizing that Baldwyn was alone in that upstairs room, browsing in a blasphemous book from the past and composing weird music on his devil's machine. But at last Saturday came, and I approached his door about one o'clock in the afternoon, because I knew he hadn't seen the sun rise for years. Encouraged by seeing a finger of smoke twist from the leaning chimney, I opened the sagging wooden gate, crossed the shadow of the maple and knocked on the door.

Presently it opened, and I was shocked at the change in my friend's face. He had aged five years; new lines creased his pale brow. His greeting was mechanical. We sat in the parlor and talked, while he lit one cigarette after another.

When I asked him if he'd had any sleep or solid food, he refused to answer. Baldwyn did his own light housekeeping, and unless watched, never ate enough to keep more than half alive. I told him he looked terrible, but he passed it off with a wave of his hand. What hellish thing had made him a gaunt image of his former self? I remonstrated; I demanded that he leave that sinister music and get some rest. He wouldn't listen.

I began to become afraid of what he'd discovered, for it was evident he had met with success of a sort. His very manner said so. Without further conversation, he remarked that he'd be busy all afternoon, and told me to return at ten-thirty that evening. I inquired about the experiment, but it was of no use. I left, promising to come back at the appointed hour.

When I rapped on his door again I had in my pocket a '38 revol-

ver I'd bought in town that very afternoon. I cannot say precisely what I planned to shoot; the gesture was prompted by a feeling of impending tragedy. There had been in Baldwyn's manner a reticence I didn't like. Always before he had told me of his triumphs and discoveries

..... Without a word Baldwyn led me to the upstairs room. Motioning me to a chair near the Lunachord, he sat on the bench and turned the switch that operated the electric motors. The thinness and pallor of his cheeks frightened me. He crushed out his cigarette and faced me.

"Rambeau, you've been very patient---I know you're curious. You also think I'm killing myself. I'll rest up for a while when I get through---here. I think I've found what I'm after---the rhythm of space, the music of the stars and the universe that may be very near or very far. You know how we've hunted for those other books, the Necronomicon, and so on? This translation of Yergler isn't very clear, but I've tried to bridge the gaps and produce the results he hinted at.

"You see, at the very beginning there were two altogether different types of music---the type we know and hear today, and another one that isn't really earthly at all. It was banned by the ancients, and only the early historians remember it. Now, the negro jazz element has revived some of these outre rhythms. They've almost got it! These polyrhythmic variants are close; boogie-woogie has a touch. Earl Hines came near with his improvisation, "Child of A Disordered Brain"....

"What will happen I can't say. Yesterday I had a letter from Lancaster in Providence, and he's positively scared! I told him my plans the last time I wrote.

"He finally admitted that he'd read the original Chronike, which is infinitely more terrible than this book we have. Lancaster warns me repeatedly against playing the music he's afraid I've written. Actually, it can't be written---there are no such symbols! It would require a new musical language. I'm not going to try that just yet, however...

"But it can't be that bad. He says there might even be some violent manifestation---the music might summon a certain thing from the shadows of another dimension.

"What I've done surely can't do anything like that... but it will be an interesting experiment. And remember, Rambeau, no interruptions."

I wanted to grab him by the neck and shake some sense into his head. My mouth opened twice, but no words came. He had started to play, and the whispering chords silence me quicker than a hand clapped over my mouth. I had to listen; genius will permit nothing else. I was bewitched, eyes fastened on his flying fingers.

The music swelled, following strange rhythm patterns I had never heard before and hope never to hear again. They were unearthly, insane. The music stirred me deeply; goose-pimples raced over me; my fingers twitched. I crouched forward on the edge of the chair-tense, alert.

A wave of cold horror swept me as the awful melody and counter-melody rose to a higher pitch. The instrument quivered and screamed as with agony. The mad fantasia seemed to reach beyond the four walls of the room, to quaver into other spheres of sound and movement, as if some of the notes were escaping my ear and going elsewhere. Baldwyn's pale lips were set in a grim smile. It was madness; the rhythms were older than the dawn of mankind, and infinitely more terrible. They reeked of a nameless corruption. It was evil---evil as the Druid's song or the lullaby of the ghoul.

During a sudden lull in the music, it happened. The skylight above us rattled, and the moonlight splashing the glass seemed to liquify and race downward. A single bolt of intense whiteness smashed

the glass, and the entire pane buckled inward. It struck the floor with a crash. The floor-lamp dimmed and went out. Still the mad overture continued, its hideous echoes shaking the entire house, seeming to reach into infinity--to caress the very stars...

In the dim uncertain moonlight I saw my friend crouched over the keyboard, oblivious to all else but the music. Then, above his head, I saw something else. At first it was only a deeper shadow. Then it moved. My mouth opened and I screamed, but the sound was lost in that bedlam of horror.

The blob of shadow floated downward, a shapeless mass of denser blackness. It thickened and gradually took shape. I saw a flaming eye, a slimy tentacle, and a grisly paw extending downward.

The music stopped, and the silence of the utter void enveloped us. Baldwyn leaped to his feet, turned and looked upward. He screamed as the blackness shifted nearer, and a smoky talon seized him. His face in the dim light was a mask of horror.

I pawed at the gun in my pocket, gazing transfixed as the writhing shadow from outside slowly encircled his head. Unsteadily, imitating the movements of a zombie, Baldwyn raised his arms to fend off the monstrosity, and they were lost in the heaving shadow.

I must have gone slightly mad then, for there is much I cannot remember. I know I leaped at the cloud, drove my fists into it. My hands touched nothing....though I recall a foetid odor. The revolver had somehow leaped into my hand and I fired at the mass, five times. The bullets smashed the wall---nothing else. Something struck me on the temple, and I fell backward. It may have been one of Baldwyn's pawing arms; I do not know.

A loud crash of discordant sound brought me to my senses. I lay on my back on the moonlit floor, revolver in hand. A nauseating odor brought me to my knees, gasping for air. Baldwyn had slumped backward over the keyboard, inert. The notes piped on, filling the chamber with hideous discord. The horror I could not see, but I felt it near.

Baldwyn's head rolled and jerked up. It was no longer human--something ghastly and alien. It was dotted with tiny gouts of blood and with holes that looked like burns, but were something else. His lips writhed, and he groaned through clenched teeth.

"...Rambeau!...Rambeau!...I can't see...Are you there...? It's got me---paralysed of me!...run for your life!Shoot me! Kill me! I can't let it---get the rest....."

His command froze me with horror. In that instant I lived ten years. I forgot the impossible shadow and the lurking fear. I saw only my friend's face and the fond memories it recalled. I thought of peaceful sunny days spent in earnest conversation beneath the huge maple; I thought of saner nights and saner music.

But that vision darkened and the horror returned. Baldwyn sank lower, his grip on the instrument gave way, and he tumbled to the floor, face upward in the moonlight. The last ghastly echoes rang in my ears; then silence. I saw the awful shadow near his head, its groping claws outstretched.....

I waited no longer. I knew he meant what he said. With trembling hand I raised the revolver and shot him in the temple. My last conscious effort was a mad scramble down the twisting stair. I stumbled and fell into a pit of darkness.

Hours later I awoke and groped my way through the house, staggered out into the moonlight. My mind was blank; I could remember very little. The terrible events were a chaotic jumble of horror. As I ran I kept looking over my shoulder, staring at the peak of the dark gable near my friend's upstairs room.

I have confessed, and I suppose the judge and jury will hang me. I really can't blame them. They would never understand why I killed him. And now I too must pay with my life for meddling in those forbidden realms of nightmare.

All of Baldwyn's manuscripts were burned---including the copy of Yergler's evil book---by a special court order. It seems the neighbors heard the screams and the savage music.

And now another terror haunts me. Often in my dreams I see a nebulous cloud of utter blackness dropping from the nighted sky to engulf me. And in the center of that nimbus I see a face, a hideous distortion of something that once was human and sane---the face of my friend; pitted and burned, even as the grisly face of Yergler's must have been.

---ooOoo---

THE SNAKE

by Duane W. Rimel

-oOo-

Churning, gurgling, twisting river
Filled with secrets yet untold;
Winding writhing through deep canyons,
Over granite gray and cold.

Idling by a wind-torn narrow,
Sweeping through some cavern black;
Taking seaward in its clutches
Things that never will come back.

Gliding past a brightened meadow,
Past a field of waving grain;
Moaning endlessly in eddies
As if stung by hate or pain.

Through a tunnel dim and musty
Hewn from stone to help it on;
By a rock whose ancient carving
Greeted many a primal dawn.

Muddy waters passing ever
In procession by the sand,
Like a march of endless soldiers
Moved by nature's great command.

Dark and brooding then at nightfall,
Whisp'ring thoughts no mind can read;
Striving to reveal in horror
Some remote and nameless deed.

But those tales go all unuttered;
Those dark mysteries it will hold
'Till that deep and muddy bosom
Lingers dry in ages old.

Yet its silent voice is calling
As it stretches pleading hands;
Calling me to cross the border---
Past the rim to other lands.

SUPERSTITIOUS ?

by H. Ken Bulmer

-cCo-

The fact that Religion - in the finest sense of that much ill-used word - has supposedly banished all superstitious fears does not mean that superstition is no longer in existence. Most people in the world today are superstition-ridden. And here is not meant those who are zealously spiritual in temperament, for true Religion is not superstition. Superstition is handed down the ages from parents to children, and with each succeeding generation becomes more firmly entrenched in the mind and the unconscious, and more widely ramified in detail. Also it loses its true meaning.

It is no unusual thing to see a group of children; in the care of one a few years their senior; energetically and with full confidence endeavouring, by every means in their power, to do think and say things which will propitiate the fates on their behalf. This is arrant and inculcated superstition. No one is completely free from the instinctive fears of this blight. A ladder leaning against a wall is a sure sign that ninety-nine people out of a hundred passing-by will painstakingly walk around it in preference to walking under it. The old joke about being run over by a passing car is all too serious to be lightly laughed at. The origin of this superstition seems easy to perceive.

So also with the bad luck attached to knocking over salt, and the seven years which follow the breaking of a mirror. In the days when salt represented the host's protection over his guests and the "taking of salt" was a solemn rite - often the hair's breadth margin between life and death - it is easy to see how the spilling of salt could readily have acquired the reputation of bringing bad luck. The counter-agent of throwing some of the spilled over the left shoulder with the right hand is not so obvious. It may have been the result of attempting to dispose of the evidence by hurriedly throwing it, unseen behind the back, to be lost among the rushes strewing the floor. Mirrors were of extreme value at one time; and if some unlucky drudge should have broken one, the seven years of bad luck would have been but one of the more publicised methods of atonement that would have fallen upon her unprotected head. Salt too was precious; and here, when it lost its fuller meaning, the bad luck would fall upon the head of anyone clumsy enough to spill it.

There are many such superstitions which can have nicely tailored explanations fitted to them. There are those which are the result of some overt action, distorted by the passage of time and inaccuracy of hand to hand repetition. Why do newly-weds have various old and mouldy shoes fixed to the back of their car by well-wishing friends? The general explanation for this is that King Canute, when blessing a newly wedded couple, would remove his sandals, and for every grain of sand shaken therefrom the blushing bride would have a child. (It is not recorded exactly whether this took place after Canute's unsuccessful attempt to Boulder Dam the sea; but should it have done so, one wonders at the faces of the bridal pair as Canute emptied out half of Goodwin Sands!)

Now so far superstition has been treated as a gradual building up of simple, natural facts with a commonplace meaning into a rather shadowy, vague edifice of musts and must nots--through the loss of the original, matter-of-fact conceptions. There are, however, superstitions which do not fall under this nice, watertight theorising. These are the superstitions for which there seems to be no logical supposi-

tion or cause.

Many people think that the number thirteen acquired its unsavory reputation because there were twelve disciples closely connected with Jesus Christ. When one of this thirteen defaulted, it became common to abhor thirteen and to always limit a party to twelve or over fourteen. However, it seems that thirteen was regarded with dread before A.D., and that the classic example was merely a further proof of the deadliness of this number. Also, the number seven has great meaning attached to it; it has great good luck and immense inner significance. The Earth according to ancient Hebrew history was created in seven "days". The Jews marched round the walls of Jericho seven times, and on the seventh by means of super-sonic vibrations produced alongside the normal sound waves, the walls of Jericho crashed down. This divinity of the figure seven stretches right back, though lately it has become much less prominent. But thirteen retains its old evil power. Agreeing that these figure superstitions did not start from the examples given, where did they originate?

One could make out quite a long list of these two kinds of superstitions. And gradually the ones that seemingly have no origin could be weeded out, their antecedents proved, and added to the other list. This would leave those superstitions which are so cloaked in antiquity that almost anything can be conjectured concerning them. Most Science-Fictionists will grant the existence of Atlantis and Mu. These fabled continents; supposedly peopled by a race of beings well advanced in knowledge; would, by the very violence of their end, have been fertile breeding grounds for superstition. Many of the simplest actions of the Atlanteans may have persisted, shrouded in mysticism, long after the cause was rusting under the sea.

To clarify this; imagine a civilisation arising after our own has crumbled into the dust (which seems most likely!), achieving a level of culture but a few decades beneath our own present state. They have not yet discovered electricity. And through the long tortuous rise from animalhood, they may have retained the gesture of a person switching on an electric light---to them meaning help by means of light in darkness. A simple explanation of a fact inexplicable to them in any other way, they would use it when attempting to unravel a knotty problem, to understand a difficult riddle, in many such ways. Thus they have acquired a superstition which they would not, in the light of their knowledge, be able to explain.

The Atlanteans were known (as we grant their existence, we will admit their achievements) to have colonized. This would indicate, if Atlantis was an abundant producer of food, that her population was growing out of hand. They may have instituted a system of birth control on a nationwide scale. The state would sanction the number of children a certain family would be allowed to raise. Now it does not seem probable that Canute originated the sandal shaking idea to determine the number of babies to be expected. Rather one can tie up the two facts and say that this superstition was a corruption of the decision of the government, or king, as to the number of children allowed; twisted down through the cobwebby corridors of time from distant Atlantis.

This may sound rather a free usage, but to get back to the originals of some of our present-day superstitions would astonish even more. One could go on postulating lavishly. But here another fascinating, and dangerous, line of research opens up.

While most stf. readers will grant Mu and Atlantis, how many fantasy and weird readers will grant the existence of the Old Gods? The Old Gods who were eminently human in their thoughts and actions, who joyed in a swift clash down on Mother Earth? Many and intricate were their Signs and Symbols and Cabals. It seems almost inevitable that they must still exist; changed and moulded, almost unrecognisable in

their march through the centuries. And their mysteries? Yes, be careful of that superstition you can't explain---it may be that you will anger a somnolent Jove or a militant Mars. To have a fiery thunder-bolt flash past may be nothing much after a fire-blitz; but Jove had a reputation as a marksman. Again, mighty Thor's hammer or Freya's sword---yes, walk circumspectly.

Harking back to the ladder superstition, this seems such an open and shut case that one is forced to wonder - is there any more behind it? Does a leaning ladder carry undreamed of potentialities of power so that it has become accursed?

One could go on this way for many more of our presentday superstitions, sifting the false from the true. One must scorn the idle--but there is just that faint, ghostly thought, are they impotent when defied? Which are true and which carry menace? Do YOU know?

---ooOoo---

VARIETY IS THE SPICE

by Harry Warner, Jr.

-oo-

"Did someone call me?"

The fire-spitting little green devil squatted in the pentagon, barely visible through the smoke. Warren Graham seemed startled, for just an instant.

"You came?" he finally asked.

"Of course. The incantation and the ritual and the--the preparations were unnecessary. The preparations are annoying, in fact. Rather gruesome, and entirely too sloppy. I come when I am really needed, and the form of the invocation is unimportant."

"You know what I want, then?"

"A change?"

"I thought so. You're thirtyish, big, handsome, have money and the ability to earn plenty more of it. Are you sure you couldn't solve your own problem, without my help?"

Graham, his self-composure regained, sprawled in the large arm-chair in the corner of the room. The apartment was furnished in perfect taste. It was very obviously a bachelor's quarters, with the absence of useless bric-a-brac and decorations, and the perfect neatness that characterize the solitary man's home.

The little green devil glided out of the pentagon, with none of the traditional respect for its powers. His small horns quivering just a little, he hastened hopefully to the fireplace set in one wall. Finding it artificial, he came back and propped himself disappointedly against the radiator.

"First," Graham said thoughtfully, "I'll have to know what the price will be. You can grant what I want; that's agreed. If we can strike a bargain--"

The imp snickered. Fiddling with the radiator control, he managed to turn on maximum heat. He sighed contentedly, and spoke.

"Forget legends and traditions. What do you think a person could possibly do for me, or give me, that I couldn't do or get for myself? More important, what could I possibly desire?"

"And don't say 'soul'. I've heard that too often before. The old authors never really dealt with me. Anyone who does is too much in earnest to waste time starting a legend or writing an epic poem about his experience."

"All right," said Graham. "I need a change, primarily; secondly, excitement, and the thrills that come from new experiences. That you already know. Now it's up to you. If you ask no price, and will give your services, so much the better for me."

"Well, what have you tried so far?"

"I spent my teens hunting for novelty, excitement, and all that. I couldn't find it. It's all very well to be a romantic soldier of fortune, or an arch-criminal. But the moments of variety, of thrills, come no more often than they would in the course of Casper Milquetoast's life. I speak from experience. As often as you fight a trader with naked blades or get in a running gunfight, the average man participates in a trolley smashup or kicks his brother-in-law out of the house. The difference is too slight to care for.

"So I decided money might somehow purchase for me novelty and differentness. A little college put me where I am now. I have enough leisure, after teaching adolescents third-year physics four or five hours a day, eight months a year. No use. The money comes in handy, to experiment toward finding something new. But those experiments never work out." He grimaced. "Never did before, that is."

"How about the war?"

"Too big a gamble. I'm draft-deferred because teachers are becoming scarce. If I enlisted, I'd have to go through months or years of the most deadly dull routine training. When I finally reached a fighting zone, I might very well get hit with a piece of shrapnel that I didn't even see coming, and be forced to spend the rest of my life in a hospital."

"Drinks? Drugs?"

"I've tried both. I knew it was useless before I began. The things they do are purely subjective. Their effects last such a short while, and they make me twice as desperate afterwards. Besides, I've gotten to be afraid of them. Suppose I became addicted, and were confined forcibly to a 'cure' that might make me go mad?"

"That's an idea," the devil said rather doubtfully. "Insanity might...."

"No, I've thought of that. Doubtful and risky. A person who was insane and cured rarely remembers what went on. If he does, the experience wasn't very nice. Insanity until death, in my case, might possibly turn the trick. The dream world might become reality to me, and I'd die not realizing that I was living in a world my own making, and death would end--"

"But it wouldn't. You're here as proof. Now where does that leave us?"

Graham began pacing the room distractedly.

"While I'm thinking," said the demon, "will you explain precisely what you mean, when you say you must have a bit of variety?"

"Anything," Graham stated carefully, "that I can be certain is not a vicarious or subjective experience; something that will actually be novel, and scare, enchant, shock, or otherwise jolt me; preferably something that can be repeated at will, and continue as long as I wish; and something that won't end my life too soon---no, there I go again. I had thought that atheism is the only sensible belief, and now you've spoiled it all. Or are you---"

The devil smirked. He hiccupped gently, and immediately ground out the resultant smouldering spot on the rug with a cloven hoof.

"It's a good thing that we got together," he said. "I have just the thing for you. You want a change. You shall have it."

"When? And how?"

"What time is it?"

"One in the morning."

"All right. You'll have it very soon, when you least expect it, and within twenty-four hours."

Are you sure there is no fee whatsoever?"

But the demon was gone.

There was no trace of him. He hadn't gone in a puff, there was

no odor of brimstone, and no memento of his visit except the equipment Graham himself had set up.

Graham went to bed, a little uncertain of his sanity.

The next day passed as did most of Graham's days. After classes, he wandered about the city uncertainly until dark. Then he returned to his apartment to await the promised thrill. He was vaguely disturbed by the last words of the devil. Since Graham had no logical reason for expecting excitement at any particular time, he was worried about the "least expect it" proviso.

Midnight came and passed, and Graham sat in his arm chair, waiting. Nothing happened.

When he next glanced at his watch, it was one thirty in the morning. The twenty-four hours had, apparently, passed. Nothing of interest had occurred. It had been a hallucination, then?

Possibly not. Graham was fairly certain that the devil had made his promise and left at a few minutes after one the preceding morning. But his watch might possibly have been slow. He waited until its hands crawled to two.

Nothing.

Methodically, he reached for the telephone, and dialed for the correct time. "Two six A.M.," came the mechanical voice. He strode over to the radio, snapped it on, and waited for one of the all-night programs to interrupt itself with a station break. It did, within a few minutes. After the call letters, the announcer laconically mentioned the fact that it was two fifteen, A.M.

More than twenty-five hours. Either he had not had the experience after all, or the word of a minion from the nether regions was not reliable.

Graham went into his bedroom, opened the top bureau drawer, and found his automatic. Unhurriedly he snapped off the safety catch, and put the muzzle to his temple. This had been inevitable for some time, he realized as he pulled the trigger.

In the split second before death, the moment when the guillotined heads were said to have the power to grimace, Graham found time to realize something. The demon had promised the change when least expected, and within twenty-four hours. Possibly he hadn't really meant the "twenty-four hours" part of it, and after twenty-four hours, Graham had least expected it!

But this suicide wasn't much of a change. It was just....

The transition came without warning, suddenly.

The floor that had been blurredly rushing up toward Graham as he fell, merged into a boiling pit. Flames immediately shot up to as far as his chin.

He could hardly see his little demon, among the multitude of others already busily working on him.

"Does this satisfy you?" The devil waved his pitchfork for emphasis. "It had better, because Hell goes on forever!"

ADVERTISEMENT:

M. F. S. B U L L E T I N :

Would you like to see a weekly news-magazine - regularly appearing, with interesting write-ups of the latest fan news?

Then try a copy of the MFS Bulletin; only 3 for 5¢.

John L. Gergen

221 Melbourne Ave., S.E.
Minneapolis, Minnesota

WITHIN THE CIRCLE

by Franklin Lee Baldwin

-oOo-

On February 13, 1934 Howard Phillips Lovecraft wrote: "...but I think Hitler is a very inferior copy-led astray by romantic conceptions and pseudo-science....In general, I think any nation ought to keep close to its original dominant race-stock--remaining largely Nordic if it started that way; largely Latin if it started that way, and so on. Only in this manner can comfortable cultural homogeneity and continuity be secured. But Hitler's extremes of pure racialism are absurd and grotesque."

-oOo-

If you know of some "budding fourteen-year-old" who has been shooting his little fan mag at you and you've suddenly decided that time is too precious for kid stuff, just hark back to the time when you were a budding fan at that same age. How thrilled you were when you received the first letter from some out-of-the-world pulp writer and how delighted when your first subscriber bestowed on you his little bit of cash and kind words of encouragement.

Well here's the thing: instead of panning their mags and ribbing these youngsters for their unfamiliarity with what's good and bad, why not offer what you can in the way of advice and encouragement? Don't forget that at some time in the future their new and then mature ideas may save you from a severe sickness, one that is almost incurable. It is called: CASE-HARDENING!

-oOo-

Lilith Lorraine, director of the "Avalon Poetry Shrine" in San Antonio, Texas, says: "For the last several years I have quit the science-fiction field because the editors have begun to demand such standardization and stereotyped stuff, so full of cheap plot and diversified dog-fights, that all ideas are crowded out. As a result they appeal to a different class of people to whose tastes I do not wish to cater."

-oOo-

If you, a reader of sf and fantasy, are bogged down and need something to give you that mental kick, I'd recommend "No Hiding Place" by William Seabrook. In his early fifties, Seabrook the voodoocist, the Arabian outlaw, the African witch-docotr, the practitioner of Black Arts, the drunkard, the amazing man of the newspaper game, takes a look at himself and finds that all through life he has been running away from something. In seeking out a hiding place he has spent time in some of the most peculiar corners of the world and amongst the strangest of people. In West Coast Africa a headsman of a tribe there remarked that he was a black man with only a white man's face--hence, he was taught all about jungle magic which later saved his wife's life when used against sorcerors in Southern France...Another of his escapes was thru drink and led to a seven month sojourn into one of the world's leading mental hospitals. When he was released he wrote a book about his stay and the many friends he made there. "No Hiding Place" is written without wasting words on moralizing. It is full of his many physical adventures and tells enough to let the reader know that he was not wanting at any time in mental excursions either. While not strictly fantasy, it tells and hints strongly at a lot of things that could be squeezed into that category, but which probably would fit better in a place of their own.

In his various delvings into the less commonplace, he had an amazing experience in connection with a Chinese book on divination and

sorcery. The book, Yi King (pronounced Yee Ching), is the oldest of all books on that subject and was written long before Confucius. It was with this book and the shuffling of the tortoise-shell wands that the Door was opened. And Seabrook was there when it swung wide, altho the one who gazed across the threshold was a girl.

His book, "Witchcraft", tells of this bit of applied occultism and also in it he remarks that G. K. Chesterton and Arthur Machen knew more than they cared to mention about various unclean cults which thrived in London.

-----ooOoo-----

LITTLE KNOWN FANTAISISTES

by Harold Wakefield

-oo-

I. SHERIDAN LE FANU

Little known to the general run of fantasy readers, but holding a high place among writers of the macabre, is Sheridan Le Fanu. An Irishman of Huguenot extraction and son of a clergyman, he was born in Dublin in 1814. Almost a recluse after the death of his wife, Le Fanu became preoccupied with the supernatural. It was during this period he produced such magnificent stories as "In A Glass Darkly", "Uncle Silas", and "Wylder's Hand".

Easily the best known of Le Fanu's stories is "Green Tea", in which through the excessive use of a particular kind of tea a clergyman's mind is left open to the assault of a familiar in the form of a hideous monkey. Even in the pulpit, it continually gibbers blasphemies in his ears, finally driving him to suicide.

Hardly less well-known is "Carmilla", which, though in the traditional vampire story form, is handled with such extraordinary skill as to rank with Stoker's "Dracula" and Worrell's "The Canal" as one of the best of all vampire stories.

"The Strange Story of Schalken the Painter" is a masterly handling of the spectre bridegroom theme and builds up to a powerful climax.

"Uncle Silas", in addition to an overpowering, oppressive atmosphere, has the distinction of having two of the most malignant characters in all weird literature: Uncle Silas - addicted to drugs - with his strangely immobile white face and glaring eyes; and the half-mad, drunken French governess capering wildly amongst the graves in the churchyard.

In spite of their having been written during the last century, the stories of Le Fanu are strangely undated. Take for example this scene from "Wylder's Hand" where the aged Uncle Lorne appears--phantom or madman we are not certain which--to confront the villainous Lake in the tapestried room:

"'Mark Wylder is in evil plight,' said he.

"'Is he?' said Lake with a sly scoff, though he seemed to me a good deal scared. 'We hear no complaints however, and fancy he must be tolerably comfortable notwithstanding.'

"'You know where he is?' said Uncle Lorne.

"'Aye, in Italy; everyone knows that,' answered Lake.

"'In Italy,' said the old man reflectively, as if trying to gather up his ideas. 'Italy... He has had a great tour to make. It is nearly accomplished now. When it is done, he will be like me--- humano major. He has seen the places which you are yet to see.'

"'Nothing I should like better, particularly Italy,' said Lake.

"'Yes,' said Uncle Lorne, lifting up slowly a different finger at each name in his catalogue. 'First, *Lucus Mortis*; then, *Terra*

Tenebrosa; next, Tartarus; after that, Terra Oblivonia; then Gehenna; and then Stagnum Ignis.'

"'Of course,' acquiesced Lake, with an ugly sneer.

"'Don't be frightened, but he's alive! I think they'll make him mad. It is a frightful plight. Two angels buried him alive in Vallambrossa by night! I saw it, standing among the lotus and hemlock. A negro came to me, a black clergyman with white eyes, and remained beside me; and the angels imprisoned Mark! They put him on duty forty days and forty nights with his ear to the river listening for voices... and when it was over we blessed them...and the clergyman walked with me a long while, to-and-fro upon the earth, telling me the wonders of the abyss.'

"'And is it from the abyss, sir, he writes his letters?' enquired the Town Clerk, with a wink at Lake.

"'Yes, yes, very diligent; it behoves him, and his hair is always standing straight on his head for fear. But he'll be sent up again at last, a thousand, a hundred, ten, and one, black marble steps, and then it will be the other one's turn. So it was prophesied by the black magician.'

-oo-

In her introduction to "Great Short Stories of Horror", Dorothy Sayers says, "Melodramatic, but a writer of real literary attainment, and gifted with a sombre power which has never been equalled in painting the ghastly and the macabre, is Sheridan Le Fanu. Like Poe, he has the gift of investing the most mechanical of plots with an atmosphere of almost unbearable horror."

A fitting tribute to a great writer.

-oo-

(Note: This is the first of a series. The next will appear in the June 15 issue of "The Acolyte". F.T.L.)

----ooOoo----

ANGKOR THOMA

A WORD PICTURE

by Virginia "Nanek" Anderson

-oo-

The elephants drowse in the shadow of fantastic carvings.
The monkeys play on balustrades of seven-headed cobras.
The mud-dauber builds in the galleries of the central temple.
Five ornate towers shimmer in the heat;
Vast pillars of strangely carven stone moulder in the jungle.
The mystery of forgotten cities broods on the edge of the Tonle Sap
Unsolved. The pale ones come in great numbers.....
They peer and gaze and pass beneath the benign countenance of Siva.
They gape at the sadistic leer of the eastern face upon the south gate;
They depart out of the jungle that yearns with outstretched arms,
And Angkor stands vast and lonely....vibrating with voices of the jungle.
There are no human voices, either of vocal cord or of instrument.
The wild elephant trumpets somewhere, afar off....
The carven women on the walls seem alive.

----ooOoo----

ADVERTISEMENT:

FOR SALE OR TRADE

A number of back issues of Famous Fantastic Mysteries, and several books by Merritt, Haggard, and Kline. Will sell for cash, or will trade for back issues of Weird Tales.

Offer #1313, c/o "The Acolyte"

-- 20 --

KEEPER OF THE GATE

by Henry Andrew Ackermann

-oOo-

I was in my house when I saw that my cousin's time had come. I took my staff and told my wife, "Sandor is finishing now. Make a little prayer here in the house. I am going to him."

My wife is wise, she knows all that concerns me; I did not need to tell her more than that. Then I set out for Sandor's house, in the latter part of the afternoon when the sun is low but still hot. As I walked along, at first I merely let my thoughts run of their own accord about my cousin, this man of whom I was so fond. As an old man will, I looked at the bright pictures of our childhood within my heart.

Being of the family of Zara, we were slightly apart from other children of the village. There was a distinction which drew all of us cousins together. From among us, more than from other families, would come persons of sacred gifts, to use the Natural Powers, to Show the Road, to Teach Prayer, and to Heal. Some group of brothers and sisters among us were children of the Keeper of the Gate; upon some one of us in his time, the gods would lay that burden.

There are villages nowadays in which the Keeper of the Gate is known to all; he performs his task as if it were an office; he receives honor and his power is slight. Those are the villages where many men speak German, even some of the women; where they are beginning to put on shoes and become civilized. We of Brunn keep to the true way; only the burgomaster of the village and a few priests know who is the Keeper of the Gate, save for his wife and perhaps his sons. Wherefore our people do not die when they go far away, traveling, and there is no sorcery among us.

When he was a boy, Sandor knew, as I learned much later, that his own father was the Keeper of the Gate in those days. It made him feel a responsibility. When he was already a big boy, he was thoughtful of us little ones. He was considerate, so that we grew up loving him, and I particularly, as we became older, was intimate with him.

It is a good league from where I live to Sandor's house. I had plenty of time to remember my grief when the soldiers came and took him to carry their packs while they went to war. For two years he was with the Nazis, and he was corrupted. He tried to make himself a German. He was ashamed then to make his prayer and his offering to the cross of his fathers. Far away among the men who wear shoes, he began to feel his powers, and after their custom he studied sorcery, the evil black magic. He came back speaking German, dressed like a German--pretending to be one. He was at odds with his own people; he bore a grudge against the world. I remembered him as he was then, how sorry I felt for him, how I thought for him.

As I climbed the hill to the house where death and the Black One waited for him and me, I fixed the details of his life in my heart. I was afraid, as the sun dropped low. Over and over in my heart I built my strength as I came to Sandor's house.

I entered without knocking, calling a greeting as I crossed the threshold. The fire was dead; there were no offerings, no flowers of myrtle or spread of garlic around his little father cross on the altar, and the place was already almost dark. He lay on his bed under an old blanket, his face drawn up and pale. One could see the fear sitting on his heart.

"It's no use, Anton," he said. "I cannot answer any more questions. I cannot show you the road now. I am finished. Leave me alone, cousin."

I went ahead and made a fire, while he watched me, too weak to lift his head. Then I took some wild roses, garlic and copal from the pouch I carried and went to the altar.

"No use to do that," he said, "our father there will not serve me. For fifty years now, I have not fed him for myself, only when I made prayer for others."

"Still, let us feed him," I answered, putting the offerings before the cross, lighting a candle and setting it on the sweet-scented copal.

"Do as you like," he said, "but it is no use. I know you are a good man, and your prayers are strong, but you cannot help me. Now go away." I thought that he did not want me to know the greatness of his sin, and also that he wished me to be out of harm's way, if Frankl should find me here. I was planning hard, for there was no way to help him unless he himself confessed to me. So I made myself stupid.

"You talk strangely," I said. "Perhaps you have a fever. I shall stay with you."

He hesitated. "There is danger here."

"What danger?" I said. "I am old. Death is my uncle."

He hesitated again, but he was fond of me, and at last he made himself say, "Frankl is coming."

"How can that be?" I asked. "The Keepers of the Gate of our village have been famous. We have no sorcerers; Frankl dares not cross our boundaries."

He closed his eyes, lying still and thinking. Then he said, "For many years, no one has watched the Gate for our people. No one has guarded them. There is no Keeper in this village." His voice was very weary.

"Foolishly you talk," I said. "You and I, who are Zaras, know that there must be one among our relatives, even though we do not know who he may be."

"There is none." He waited again, thinking. "I will tell you. You have some kind of power, I don't know what. And it is well to confess even though it be useless. I am the Keeper of the Gate."

"Well then...." I made myself surprised.

"But I never took up my burden. I never did anything about it. Listen: I sold my soul; I made a bargain with Frankl. I, the Keeper of the Gate. I am accursed. Now he is coming for me. Go away and be safe."

I shook my head. "Why do you think you are the Keeper?"

He sighed. "Prop up my head, then. I shall tell you the whole story, and hope that you will go away then."

"My father was Keeper of the Gate. There is no reason why I should not let you know that now."

"I was unhappy when I was away. I was pretending to be German, and really I wanted to be roumi again. I counted on two things for my return; on my father, and that girl I wanted to marry, with whom I had spoken when she went to get water. With their help I should forget the evil magic; I should return to my kind."

"But I came back to find my father dead and the girl married to Ladislas. I went to Ladislas's house; I sat by his fire. They were ill at ease, and sought to please me. While I was there, looking at that woman and seeing her bustling for another man, joined with him; my heart burned, my heart fought. Sitting there, I thought of all my sorrows. There is no Keeper of the Gate, I thought, and I am a sorcerer. Then it came to me; it was I to whom my father's burden was given; it was I who should protect the village from sorcerers, from Frankl, from evil happenings on the roads."

"I left hastily and I thought hard. I walked long by myself; I decided to repay myself for all that had happened to me, to punish

this world which had turned against me. I decided to call Frankl and make a contract with him."

"What was your contract?" I asked.

"First, that since he was to have my soul, he would treat this village just as if it had a Keeper of the Gate, save for what concerned me."

"Why did you ask that? I thought you were angry at the village."

"I was. I don't know why. It came to me then, as if it had been told to me, and he agreed."

"Then what?"

"That he would help me in all my sorcery. I could make myself rich and great; I could become burgomaster of the village. I could take that woman, and as many others as I chose. I could wither my enemies." It was quite dark now. I looked around in the firelight, putting on some sticks of fat pine. I thought to myself that if he had not completed that evil bargain, he would always have gone on trying after evil, nursing his anger. The pine sticks flared up, showing the room's bareness and disorder.

"Have you chests of gold hidden?" I said. "This house is poorer than when you moved into it."

He said, "When will you let me die? People mentioned my name--they came to me. I became a Shower of the Road, a Samaritan. No, I couldn't be called a "good" Samaritan because of my evil pact. I waited for time enough to myself to get rid of the smell of incense, and set down that burden. Then when I did have a space of time, all I felt was pity for my village, for its people whose troubles I knew so well, who needed me. Some day, I thought, I shall do a few things for myself; but I have been too busy, year after year. And now I am finished. You cannot have any more foolish questions. Go away. Frankl has to come."

Sandor rolled his head off the folded robe I had put under it, and closed his eyes. He was exhausted, but he had confessed. He lay there in that pain and the fear to which he had resigned himself, his face gaunt and hollow.

I warmed my hands again.

"Good," I said. "Now let him come, he who is Frankl."

I saw Sandor's eyelids flicker, but he was past speaking.

"Come now," I said. "We are ready for you. We bid you come."

Frankl came....came with the high rushing sound of great winds--the house itself seemed to tremble under the impact of tremendous forces from without--and yet I knew, since I had just come in from the outside, that the air was quiet, that no wind blew. The fire lost force. And now there arose from the seemingly empty air of the room a growing ululation, accompanied by a ghastly gibbering from among which certain words were audible--certain horrible words only too familiar to me from sight of them in the books of the Master, which all of the family of Zara must study. It was like a glimpse of Hell to hear the evil mouthings of beings long ago banished to outer spaces, to remote places of earth and universe by the Master.

As I listened with growing horror, a black, dim, shadowy shape formed by Sandor's bed. I saw nothing specific, but afterwards I seemed to remember having seen a face and shoulders. There was power there. It seemed as though the greatness of my cousin's fear overflowed from him to materialize Frankl.

Sandor turned his head slightly and opened his eyes. They were filmy. He tried to speak, and made a moaning sound. His breath rasped. I assembled my power; I became fully what I am. I was excited and afraid of failure, and glad that the end of this long struggle had come--all this I subdued within myself.

"What are you doing here?" I asked. "There is an altar and a four-pointed cross in this house. How come you within the boundaries

of this village?"

Frankl answered me. "At no time has this man made prayer for himself to this little cross. At no time has he fed it on his own account. His father did before him, and you have since, but he never. I can do as I please in this house."

"You know better than what you are saying," I told him. "The cross of his fathers is fat with offerings, it is strong, its content exists, there. That he prayed always for others, showing them the road, only makes his prayers stronger. You know that."

"True," said Frankl shortly. He was angry; he became bigger; his darkness spread.

My cousin looked towards me, as though he wished to tell me to run away before the Black One became furious and destroyed me.

"I came for what is mine," Frankl said. "No cross, no power can prevent me from taking my own." He slid an arm of blackness along my cousin's bed. I could see the green fear leap up in Sandor as he felt it; I thought his soul would leap visibly out of his body. He could not even moan. I too was well afraid.

"What is yours is yours," I said. "But where is it? I do not see it here."

"Nonsense you talk," Frankl said. "You waste my time." He slid the arm of his influence almost to Sandor's head. "Here is mine, his spirit by contract sold to me freely. Go home, you Anton, to that which is within your power."

"There was no sale. There was an offer for sale, but no purchase was made. Make yourself small, you have nothing here."

The darkness came away from along the blanket. "I see we must argue," he said. "Perhaps you will talk yourself into my service. You want to lay the matter before the Great One. Very well."

"It was a fair bargain; if he fooled himself, that is his business and no fault of mine. You yourself have bought and sold a horse in your time."

"True," I said, "but if a man offers to buy my horse, and takes him; and no money, no object, not a little copper coin nor a measure of grain has been given me, the horse is still mine. I take him back. Is it not so?"

"Cease quibbling," Frankl said. "I made a contract. I kept it. That is all."

"You promised you would do all in your power to help him in his sorcery?" I asked.

"Yes. Why not?"

"You promised nothing then. You agreed to treat this village as if there were a Keeper of the Gate in it?"

"Yes. Why not?"

"You agreed to nothing then. Can a man ask pay for not stopping the sun from rising?"

"That doesn't matter," Frankl said. "The terms of the bargain are of no importance. When he took that wicked thought into his heart, when he was willing to reject a sacred burden, when he called me and offered to bargain with me, right there he became mine. There is no power here to stop me."

He became wider, more menacing; he seemed to press outward towards me, to push against the firelight. He reached, he flowed towards Sandor. The place was full of a cold which was inside one, not on his skin. Fear looked out of all the corners.

"I shall not argue the second part of what you say," I said. "If it be true or untrue will soon be proven. There was a reason for letting him fulfill his thought, as you well know. For the first part--a sin can be atoned," I said. "He has paid a thousand times over for his time of wishing evil. That cannot bind him now. You have only

your contract, and in that was deceit."

"How then?" Frankl asked. "I grow tired of your chatter. How then?"

"Before the bargain was closed, he was excited then. He was afraid of what he was doing, and he excited himself to complete it, telling himself what desired things it would bring. He talked so as to encourage himself."

"True," Frankl said. "What of it?" He was uneasy.

"On that night, at that time, you were pleased to be trapping a good soul for your service, and you were afraid that he might draw back."

Frankl was slow in answering. "True," he said.

"When then, at the last moment he faltered, when he said to you, 'You will give me that girl; now as soon as this night is over you will give her to me, to have as long as I please,'; when he said that, in those words, what did you answer?"

Frankl grew; he became huge; he filled the house. "I answered 'Yes,'" he said with a roar.

"And you know you lied," I said.

He reached up to the rafters, up to the roof-tree; he stretched from side to side; he crushed the fire down. There were great seizing hands. "What of it?" he roared. "You have let me in. I shall take you both; then I shall consume your village."

I leapt up. I rose high, with all my power in me, with my staff in my hand. "Let us try ourselves then," I shouted. "Out! Out! Black One! Evil One! Out thief! Out liar! Now the crosses of the corners close in; the four directions contract; the middle arises! Out, out of this land!"

There was a great noise of the wind which stirred nothing. Stars were blotted out and appeared again, one after another. Then there was silence, and the dogs of the outlying farms near us, and down in the village, began to howl together. The fire leapt up brightly, giving forth warmth.

I looked at Sandor. His eyes were open, his face tranquil and happy, and he had the astonished look of a man to whom a surprising truth has just become clear.

"No matter how great one's power," I said, "one cannot read the unseen in what concerns himself."

He smiled faintly, then he turned his head towards his corss and his lips moved. I was satisfied then. I let him go.

I arranged him, and set the death candles around him. Later I would call the family to lament him properly.

I felt tired and peaceful, and ready for my own time to come. It was over, the life-long struggle, the constant vigilance, the heaviest part of my burden since first, when my cousin's father had died, I became the Keeper of the Gate of this village.

-----oo0oo-----

NIGHT

Translated from the German of Wilhelm Jensen by William H. Evans

-oo0-

Night stillness
High on the world;
A mighty will
Guides and holds
The star turmoil
That no thought conceives.
Stand silent, and feel
How futile you are!

Nachtige Stille
Hoch ueber der Welt;
Ein maechtiger Wille
Lenkt und haelt
Das Sternengewusche,
Das kein Denken ermoezt.
Steh schweigend und fuehle
Wie nichtig du bist!

CANADA CALLING

by Leslie A. Croutch

-oOo-

It looks as though the sudden and unannounced demise of UNCANNY TALES is absolute fact. Alan Child, Canadian west coast fan, sent a ms. to UT and had it returned with the notation that UT no longer was in business. This leaves us supplied only by Popular's Canadian Super-Science, and American News Canadian edition of Weird Tales. UT certainly went out in a blaze of glory though. For our Christmas present it gave us a big, thick so-called quarterly number.

-oOo-

Canadian fanzine publishing picked up the first of the year. Alan Child finally got his MEPHISTO finished and in the mails, and a mighty good hektoed job it is. Titled "Canada's Weird Fanzine", it goes in for uncanny, spookish material only. The cover, which is by Gordon Peck, isn't at all weirdish, being a damsel who manages to look only beautiful. (If I may interrupt, MEPHISTO is really a worthy job, serious in approach, and with some very good material---send 5¢ to Alan Child, Room 347, 2647 Willow Street, Vancouver, B.C. ---FTL.) From St. Andrew's College in Ontario, birthplace of Hurter's CENSORED, his friend Beak Taylor, on the insistence of Hurter, has hektoed the first edition of 8-BALL. It is of a format even smaller than normal, neatly put up, but the copy I got is somewhat dim. Beak promises a mimeoed mag next time.

-oOo-

Popular seems always to bring out Canadian editions of its magazines sooner or later. We fans up here are keeping our fingers crossed and hoping FFM is one of those. RAILROAD STORIES and ARGOSY are part of the crowd, so why not MARY GNAEDINGER? ... Notice those single staples holding the magazines together these days? Wonder how many fans are going to start clans for the return of the dual staple?.... Wonder if these new regulations on paper will affect the fanzine publishers? I know they don't use anything at all compared with the big boys, but the time may be coming when nobody will be able to walk in anywhere and buy a thousand sheets of paper. Then where will we be? The point I am making, isn't it about time we fan publishers started investigating suitable paper substitutes for our publications just in case? I'm not trying to cry "Wolf", but look what happened to Poland, Belgium, and Holland for being caught unprepared...

-oOo-

News up here is slack. Sometimes even I, an active fan and publisher, wonder if there is a very big and active fandom here in the Dominion. I've noticed a definite dropping off of interest in those who were all afire a year ago; though their places are being taken to a certain extent by newcomers. Ted White, who is overseas, still manages to be as active as any of those still at home, but he's the exception.....Therefore, pardon the laxity of this offering, and Viva La Canada!

BIBLIO CORRECTION

By the way, I think I have discovered an omission in your "Cthulhu Mythology". This is the "Hounds of Tindalos" which Lovecraft mentioned in "The Whisperer in Darkness"--WT Aug. 1931. Frank Belknap Long's story, "The Hounds of Tindalos", appeared in WT for March 1939. Also did HPL mention "The Abominable Snow Men" before F.B. Long's poem of that name (WT June-July 1931)? (Yes, "Whisperer in Darkness was written in 1930. FL) -- Harold Wakefield.

CRACKS~WISE AND OTHERWISE

The general sentiment among "Acolyte" readers called for a much larger letter section; however I'll still stick to my guns to a certain extent, and emphasize paragraphs of general interest. To keep up with reader opinion, a new rating system will be used, and I'd appreciate it if you would rate this and subsequent issues by it. I've gone through the letters of comment and assigned ratings as follows: best item in issue, 5; second best, 4; third best, 3; favorable mention, 2; unfavorable mention, -3. In case of doubt, I allowed tie ratings except in the case of first choice. The following figures are cumulative totals:

Cthulhu Mythology.....	89	Canada Calling.....	18
Beyond.....	60	Poetry as a whole.....	18
Rondo and Ilana.....	38	Kismet.....	16
Within the Circle.....	33	Enigma.....	15
Shadow Over Innsmouth....	23	Editorial.....	11
Mood.....	22	"Cracks".....	3

Ratings through the courtesy of R. Wright, Burbee, Ashley, Baldwin, Child, Van Houten, Bovard, Cook, Warner, Wakefield, W. Evans, Bronson, Gergen, Lorraine, Edwards, Lamb, Wollheim, Hartle, Becker, Clever, Saha, Miller, Wilimczyk.

-000-

"I must say that it is a real pleasure to see a fan mag that actually deals with fantasy literary work rather than the general run-of-the-mill juvenilites of the fan field today... I can't say that I like Croutch's opinions on Canada's Uncanny Tales. There are lots worse mags passing on US newsstands as fantasy publications (and I don't necessarily mean poor Palmer only). UT's printing job may not be the best, but what does a man expect when the total circulation that could be expected of Canada even in balmy days is still too small for a US publisher to care about? (Not that US companies don't publish good looking Canuck editions, but...) I've seen the other native Canadian rags, and believe me, Croutch should be ashamed of himself knocking the only good one of the lot. Nor is UT only a collection of reprints (even if they do have considerable good taste in their pick -- if I have to say so myself from whose pages a good many were taken) but they use a lot of original stuff as well. I just wanted to get this off my chest, for your readers unfamiliar with UT will get an entirely unfair opinion of it from Les's uncalled-for assault."

DONALD A. WOLLHEIM.

-000-

"Oh, and I meant to say a word or two about plotless stories. My objection to Campbell's not liking them isn't so much that I dislike stories with plots, naturally. It's that I don't like Campbell's rules, which are very definite although we don't hear much about them. I'm thoroughly disgusted with the slanting necessary for modern magazines of all sorts, and pulps in particular. The situation is really crucial in the stf. field; each magazine is almost a reflection of the personality of its editor, and the stories all sound as if they were written by one man--the editor. That makes it swell for those who learn the trick of writing fiction just as the editor wants it written, but it's deucedly hard on the reader. The large number of pulp stf. magazines today is all that saves us from deadly monotony. Can you name just one prozine that would be satisfactory to you, month in and month out, if you had no variety as supplied by the others? Although some parts of Jack Woodford's "Writing and Selling" infuriate me (especially his way of connecting the sex impulse with every conceivable human action, thought, and trait!) his page or two on the perils of editors who specialize is swell. And I hope his prophecy is true, and we go back to the days when pulp

publications were just coming into their own, and a magazine like the Argosy of fifteen and twenty-five years ago had a phenomenal circulation."

HARRY WARNER, JR.

-o00o-

"Many thanks for The Acolyte, which certainly stands out among fan magazines, and should make a worthy successor to the old Fantasy Fan. You are welcome to reprint my prose pastels. Also, you can print the enclosed sonnet, "The Mime of Sleep", which was written rather recently. As soon as I have a leisure hour to dig through piles of ancient mss., I'll see if I can't disinter some more pastels for you. I have the impression that there must be a few of these lying fathom-deep in the literary debris of years!"

CLARK ASHTON SMITH.

-o00o-

"Some years ago, I had several science-fiction stories published, among them: INTO THE 28th CENTURY, THE ISLE OF MADNESS, THE JOVIAN JEST, THE BRAIN OF THE PLANET, CELESTIAL VISITOR, etc. I may still return to science-fiction some day, whenever the market ceases to be so stereotyped and standardized that it kills out all new ideas and original manner of expressing them. I have a rather daring idea in mind of starting a national magazine for the publication of rejected stories and showing up just how fine some of the rejected stories of the really great science-fiction writers are; in other words, showing what people like Coblenz, Francis Flagg, Clark Ashton Smith, etc. can do if they are really turned loose, free from editorial fetishes."

LILITH LORRAINE.

-o00o-

"I have read thoroughly your quite important article on the Cthulhu Mythology. This article indicate a devotion to the writings of Lovecraft, and a real study of his work which tells me I was not mistaken in placing in your hands almost the last copy of my Memoriam to him. You have done a great deal in this article to clarify the Lovecraft mythos, and to explain perhaps better than Lovecraft could have done it himself his hazy but always developing Out-of-Space mythology. Lovecraft fans owe you a debt of thanks."

W. PAUL COOK.

-o00o-

"I really enjoyed the second issue of The Acolyte more than any other fanzine in ages. When you glance casually through the magazine you can see that there isn't much to it except plain, ordinary typing. And yet, somehow the mag has developed a pleasing atmosphere all its own. It is stimulating. Its very unpretentiousness makes one like it at first sight."

PHIL BRONSON.

-o00o-

"...the hell with format; all that really matters is the quality. I don't mind if the edges are uneven, if there are no illustrations, or even if it is on yellow sheets, but for Ghu's sake keep up the quality of the contents and keep the material serious. I'm tired of reading the droolings of juveniles!"

MANSON BRACKNEY.

-o00o-

"Perhaps if the markets are real good, which will put me in a good mood, I might find time to write something especially for you - of a nature that wouldn't be saleable material, but would make good reading if you understand what I mean. Occasionally, I like to say to hell with form and write something that's downright gruesome just to get it out of my craw. Some things just can't be beaten into the regular commercial formula, and unfortunately never see the light of day, except in publications such as your own."

MANLY BANISTER.

-o00o-

To all you folks, thanks for writing your criticisms and comments --- I hope that this issue fills my mailbox as full as the last one did. Good reading to you all.

FRANCIS T. LANEY.

THE SUMMONS

by Alan Child

-oOo-

The dreamer found himself standing against a high fence, looking up. Darkness surrounded him, but the object at which he was looking was illuminated so that he had no difficulty seeing it. It was a stair-which ascended into the sky further than the eye could reach. Up it in a never-ending line marched hundreds of people--all types, young and old, some well-dressed and some shabby. It was as if they had been summoned without notice by someone, someone so great that they were compelled to obey.

The dreamer's heart beat fast. In the same manner in which the people on the stairway seemed compelled to march upward, it seemed that he was compelled to watch. Surely no one had ever before seen such a thing--at least had never spoken of it afterwards. He cried and clung to the fence behind him. He was young. This spectacle was nothing to fear. This was just...just... His thoughts trailed off as words do when nothing seems to make sense.

Now with a bewildered, half-demented look on his face he watched the climbers. Time passed slowly, and the dreamer's heart beat more normally. He found himself becoming able to think more clearly, but he shunned his thoughts, and stared at the grim faces which looked neither to the right nor left but forever plodded upward. He could not bear the futile monotony, and began to call to those on the stairs. Each time he grew more desperate; each time he called louder. He heard the dull echo of his own voice but nothing more. No head so much as turned. Finally with all the strength left in his body he gave a last pleading cry and looked despairingly up at the stairway.

A girl gave a slight start, turned around, and smiled. It was a pleasant sort of smile, one that brings comfort to the soul, friendly, sympathetic. It was all too short, for in a moment she turned as if remembering herself, and proceeded onward. He tried to call again to her but his throat seemed paralysed.

Once more alone with his misery, he continued to stare upward, dully, apathetically. So many of the faces he saw looked vaguely familiar, yet he could place none of them. Then with a start, he noticed a face that stood out from the rest, young, undisillusioned. He studied it more closely. It looked like...merciful God, it was! His most horrifying fear was the truth. The man he saw was himself!

This is the type of dream from which one wakes perspiring and troubled---but this dreamer never awoke.

EDITORIALLY SPEAKING. (Cont. from page 2)

DUANE RIMEL'S POEM, The Snake is the first of a series dealing with the Snake River; which, rising in southern Idaho, comprises a good bit of the Idaho-Oregon, Idaho-Washington boundaries, and finally empties into the Columbia. Duane has lived within stone's throw of the Snake all his life.....Music From The Stars is an authentic bit of writing in many ways. "Baldwyn" is of course none other than Franklin Lee, of Within the Circle and Golem fame; while "Rambeau" is Rimel himself, and the locale Lee's former home at Asotin, Washington. The moral? Never get acquainted with an author; he'll kill you off sure!

-oOo-

SUPERSTITIOUS?, written by an English fan, is used in The Acolyte through the courtesy of Harry Warner, Jr.

-oOo-

YOUR COMMENTS on this fanzine are earnestly invited. The next issue will appear June 15. 'Till then, happy reading.

FTL.

